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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 002093

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DEPARTMENT FOR ISN/CTR (GOODMAN, CAMERON, BODNAR, AND RAO)
AND EUR/PRA (FRIEDT, NASH)
NSC FOR CLEDDY, MHAYWARD
HHS/OGHA FOR WSTEIGER, MABDOO, MLVALDEZ, LSAWYER AND
IESSIET-GIBSON
DOD/CTR FOR AWEBER AND JREID

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2017
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [PARM](#) [TSPL](#) [CTR](#) [CBW](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA: NO ANSWER YET ON SMALLPOX RESEARCH

REF: A. STATE 57613

[1](#)B. MOSCOW 600
[1](#)C. 06 MOSCOW 12727
[1](#)D. 06 STATE 192069

Classified By: EST Counselor Daniel J. O'Grady. Reason 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) On May 7 we met with Oleg Chestnov, Deputy Director of the Health and Social Development Ministry's International Department, and delivered Ref A letter from HHS Special Assistant Steiger to Deputy Health and Social Development Minister Starodubov. NOTE: Chestnov was a last-minute substitution for Starodubov, with whom we made the appointment. END NOTE. We also delivered the related points, as a non-paper, on restarting the joint U.S.-Russian smallpox research at the Vector State Research Center of Virology and Biotechnology near Novosibirsk. We reiterated our earlier messages (Ref B) about the importance of this joint research and the need for Russia and the United States to present a united front at the World Health Assembly (WHA) May 14-18 against those countries who continue to argue for the destruction of the disclosed stocks of smallpox at CDC Atlanta and Vector. We noted that we had heeded Russia's earlier concerns about a visiting U.S. researcher at Vector, and had redrafted these research projects so that U.S. collaborators would only visit Vector once every quarter, at a minimum, for consultations.

[1](#)2. (C) Chestnov said that he recognized that the new proposals represented a "fair compromise" in light of the earlier Russian concerns. He stated that HHS Secretary Leavitt and Health and Social Development Minister Zurabov would likely be able to speak by phone in advance of the World Health Assembly on either May 10 or 11, and hoped that Zurabov could give Secretary Leavitt an answer at that time on restarting research. He noted that Chief Medical Officer Onishchenko's Federal Surveillance Service for Consumer Rights and Human Well-Being (Rospotrebnadzor), which has jurisdiction over Vector, still needed to provide some background information to the Ministry in advance of the call. Otherwise, there were no obstacles to the call proceeding. Chestnov also indicated that Deputy Minister Starodubov would be available to meet with HHS Special Assistant Steiger in Geneva on either the afternoon of May 14 or the morning of May 15, to discuss a common smallpox message and strategy within the WHA.

[1](#)3. (C) Expanding beyond smallpox, Chestnov said that Russia

would like to discuss establishing a strategic partnership on global health issues with the United States, noting that the Ministry was engaged in similar discussions with the EU. As Russia continues to position itself as an emerging international health donor, he stated that this partnership could expand our cooperation beyond the Bratislava AIDS Initiative agreed to by Presidents Bush and Putin in 2005, and other joint endeavors like smallpox. He suggested both sides should first discuss informally what would be the most promising avenues of collaboration. We welcomed Chestnov's suggestion and proposed holding initial informal discussions after the conclusion of the WHA.

BURNS